

A non-profit corporation to promote the preservation and development of buildings of historical and architectural significance in New London, Connecticut, beginning with Union Railroad Station.



Vol. III, No. 4

Fall 1979

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NEW LONDON, CT 06460

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Monday, December 10

Monthly Board of Directors meeting will be held at the Public Library of New London at 7:00 P.M.

Sunday, December 16

NLL-URST has an Open House at our new office on 10 Meridian Street from 1-4 P.M.

Monday, January 14

Monthly Board of Directors meeting will be held at the Public Library of New London at 7:00 P.M.

Coming This Winter

Preservation Film Series featuring award-winning films from Connecticut and the nation.

PLAQUES PRESENTED TO HOMEOWNERS

On Sunday November 4, a small group of people gathered at 30 Granite Street to receive plaques to affix to their homes. These individuals had opened their homes to the public for a house tour sponsored by NLL-URST in October 1977.

The plaques are made of wood, donated by the Miner and Alexander Lumber Company. They were designed and made by John Gula, who stenciled and hand-painted a pale blue whale on a white background. Superimposed on the whale is the name of the original owner of the house, his trade or occupation, and the date the house was built.

The recipients of the plaques are:
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Bagwell, 20 Prospect St
John and Nancy Gula 34 Channing St
Attorney and Mrs. Francis McGuire,
68 Federal St
George and Bess Oldershaw, 42 Vauxhall St
Mr. and Mrs. Earl Wilson, 30 Granite St
Charles Zimmer, 17 Granite St

INTERVIEW WITH A PRESERVATIONIST

In every community, there's always someone who takes responsibility for some small, forgotten plot of land-not their own, but long set aside for public enjoyment. They don't belong to an association, group or club for preservation or conservation. They feel a compulsion to preserve a place of beauty for future generations.

Warren Fish, a Mystic resident, is one such individual. Business took Fish away from this area for about 40 years. On his retirement he returned to Mystic, where his family has lived for many generations.

He took up an old interest of his father's, the maintenance of Whitehall Cemetery. This is a colonial graveyard located at the intersection of Routes 27 and I 95 on the Stonington side of the Mystic River. The oldest grave marker dates back to 1685.

Fortunately, Fish discovered that he was not alone in his efforts to maintain the Whitehall estate. "It was while I was working at the cemetery that I first noticed the rehabilitation work going on at the Whitehall Mansion, which had just been acquired by the Stonington Historical Society." said Fish.

Needless to say, Fish became involved with the historical society and their work. With the help of a committee, he wrote a booklet on the history and restoration of the Whitehall Mansion. He later became a trustee for the Stonington Historical Society and a member of the editorial board for their quarterly publication called "Historical Footnotes".

At present, Fish is less involved with this group because of other responsibilities, most notably, as trustee and officer of the Indian and Colonial Research Center. The Center, consisting of a library and museum, continued on page 5

Housing conservation has been working quietly in New London for the past seven years. It is one of the more successful federal programs administered by the city.

The program provides low-interest loans at 3% to low and moderate income families for doing rehab work on their houses. A grant program for those on a fixed income is also part of the Housing Conservation Program.

The Housing Act of 1964 created a funding source for rehabilitation loans to be made available to the public. It was written, in part, in response to the outcry raised against urban renewal projects of the 1960's, which tended towards demolition.

The New London program began in 1972. At first people were reluctant to get involved with yet another federal program, according to Jean Louhisdon, assistant coordinator for Housing Conservation in New London. The office stepped up its public relation efforts, and more people saw the benefits of participating in the program.

Housing Conservation is funded through Community Development monies. This year, beginning July 1, 1979, \$350,000 has been allocated for the loan program, and \$50,000 has been set aside for the grant program. Officials hope to receive the same level of funding next year, although the Community Development Block Grant to the city is significantly less.

There is another loan program administered by the city through Housing Conservation. It is the Federal 3-12 Program, funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is specifically for use in work done on multi-family units. Last year, exceeding the allocation by \$300, \$266,300 was spent in rehabilitating 19 buildings.

The New London program is one of three original programs in the state. Now fifteen communities have similar programs modeled after the New London one. Mr. Louhisdon feels that the Connecticut region has programs of consistently greater quality than those elsewhere in the country, and that the New London program shines among these.

His sentiments are supported by a recent report from HUD, which shows that more loans were processed in New London's 3-12 program than in other cities in the state, making it the most successful program in Connecticut.

Main Street Revitalization: Business and Preservation in Partnership is the theme of a two day conference December 6 and 7 at the Sheraton-Park Plaza Hotel in New Haven. The conference is the second in a series of workshops organized and sponsored by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.

Main Street, the downtown business community, has suffered greatly throughout the country during the past two decades of suburban sprawl. With the proliferation of shopping centers and malls on the outskirts of the city, the quality and vitality of the central business district has been diminished.

The Main Street Revitalization Conference will focus on practical approaches to making downtowns attractive and thriving centers once more. Business, government, and civic leaders have been invited to hear persons with expertise in finance, architecture, community organization, real-estate marketing and preservation.

The conference will include panel discussions on the following topics:

How to Organize a Downtown Revitalization Project

How to Attract and Keep Business on Main St
Design Considerations: Adaptive Use and New Construction

Financing for Downtown Revitalization

Richard Creviston, president of the Savings Bank of New London, will moderate the panel on finance. C. Francis Driscoll, City Manager of New London, will also participate in that program.

FILM WINS NATIONAL AWARD

"The Rescue of Mr. Richardson's Last Station" has won an award in the 1979 Film/Video Competition sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The film was commissioned by NLL-URST, who owns the film. It was written, produced, filmed and edited by John Gordon Hill. It is a 16mm color/sound film documenting the efforts of Union Railroad Station Trust to save Union Station in New London.

The film was one of six to win the award. Hill received the \$1000 prize. Persons interested in renting the film may contact Claire Dale, 442-4506, or write NLL-URST, P.O.Box 1134, New London, CT. 06320



THE PRESERVATION WATCH

Over the last few years, we have seen housing sites carved out of the once elegant front lawns of our city's prime residential district. These houses are old, large, architecturally interesting and perhaps significant. They are also expensive to maintain and impossible to heat. Few families are in need of the amount of space available in these gracious homes.

To some, these homes are white elephants. But at the same time, they help define the character and identity of our city in the same way that the Station and the Courthouse and Bank Street are landmarks for our downtown area.

These homes deserve better than to be buried behind a row of box-like houses whose lack of architectural character detracts from the entire neighborhood. Little thought seems to have been given by the city to the effect of these small-scale houses on the streetscape, the neighborhood, or the large old homes that make New London such a visually interesting city.

As Preservationists, we are concerned. We think that permitting this type of development is detrimental to the city as a whole. We are aware of the problems homeowners face with regard to maintaining these large homes. But we suggest that solutions to these problems exist which will permit development that will enhance the neighborhood, rather than detract from it.

Here are some appropriate development options for the large remaining estates in New London.

1. The study of alternate options for land use, including recommendations for lot size and siting to minimize disruption of existing streetscapes.
2. The establishment of a design review board, as outlined in the book, "Design Review Boards: A Handbook for Communities" published by the American Institute of Architects.
3. The study of alternate options for economically dividing up the buildings on large estates, while retaining their architectural integrity.

One option that has been successful in other communities is dividing old estates into luxury condominium units, with off-street parking and planned landscaping. This permits an economically feasible development, maintenance of existing streetscape, and preservation of an attractive neighborhood.

It also removes the financial pressure from an owner who feels he must sell off as much land as possible to offset the fact that the house itself is rarely marketable as a single unit.

These large homes could easily accommodate three or four luxury condominium units while retaining their original appearance. We would create owner occupied housing for some of our citizens who no longer want to maintain a large single-family home, but wish to remain in New London. There would be a significant increase in the tax base.

Creative planning and zoning will enhance the community. We urge the city to study the options available and pursue such a course.

Carrie Makover

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

New London Landmarks-Union Railroad Station Trust, Inc. has reached a crossroads in its history. At the October meeting of the Board of Directors, several steps were taken which augur well for the future both of our organization and of preservation in New London.

First, we have hired a part-time staff member, Sharon Churchill, who has done a tremendous amount of work on our newsletter, house tours and membership. Her task will be to expand the newsletter, to encourage membership growth, and help to provide more services to the members. We have now obtained office space to increase our accessibility to the public.

The second great step NLL-URST has taken is to begin the Revolving Fund discussed in the last newsletter issue. We are negotiating an option on an abandoned building in one of the deteriorated neighborhoods of New London, and at the same time seeking the funding to complete the acquisition and restore the home.

I am optimistic that the coming months will witness exciting results in this endeavor, and hold the promise of striking results in preservation in New London.

Dale S. Plummer

FOR THE PROPERTY OWNER **PRESERVATION**

PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES

Historic preservation has become a substantial force of social, economic and aesthetic benefit to communities across Connecticut. Recognizing the architectural charm and spatial advantages of old houses, families and individuals are moving back to older pedestrian-scaled neighborhoods.

Personal endeavors--often aided by federal, state, and municipal neighborhood preservation programs--have resulted in the rejuvenation of many once-declining communities.

Merchants are also realizing that older buildings possess character, tradition, and fine craftsmanship that no suburban shopping center can duplicate. Carefully renovated downtown business districts which a few years ago might have seemed old-fashioned are now becoming the nuclei of urban revitalization.

Dangers of Improper Rehabilitation

In rehabilitating older buildings for contemporary uses, property owners must face many complex decisions. While much work is undertaken with good intentions, the wrong techniques or types of materials are often used. As a result, the integrity of the building is compromised and the work actually damages the building it was intended to improve--and frequently proves more expensive than the correct treatment.

With this column, this newsletter is beginning a series on proper preservation techniques which has been designed especially for the property owner. Each column will focus on a particular rehabilitation task or special problem commonly encountered in old buildings, such as restoring plaster, determining original paint colors, and cleaning masonry.

Three Basic Principles

Before undertaking a rehabilitation project, property owners should remember the basic principle of preservation--that it is better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, better to restore than reconstruct.

Old building fabric should be retained whenever possible; modifications should be made only when necessary to stabilize the structure and adapt it to contemporary, functional use.

Similarly, it is better to retain genuine building fabric from different periods or phases of a structure's life than to remove or obscure it in a restoration that will falsify the history of the building.

A third important principle is that no final decisions should be made concerning a rehabilitation construction program for a building until thorough architectural and documentary research has been carefully conducted and evaluated.

Buildings as Neighbors

The rehabilitation of any individual building will affect its immediate environment. Buildings are the major components that define the character of neighborhoods, especially in densely built-up residential areas and in central business districts. Property owners should honor the architectural heritage of their surroundings, respecting the original proportions, lines, colors, textures and materials of nearby buildings.

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To join the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, interested persons are invited to contact the Trust's office at 152 Temple Street, New Haven, CT 06510.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

With this issue, the NLL-URST newsletter undergoes several changes. The most obvious of these is the amount of material now accomodated between the covers. Doubling the size of the newsletter allows for more news items, columns and feature stories which have previously fallen by the wayside.

The expanded newsletter also costs twice as much to produce. To offset this expense, we are now accepting limited advertising. This will provide our readers with a listing of quality craftsmen, stores and firms with a sensitivity to preservation.

A new column starts with this issue, Interview With A Preservationist, written by Jill Wasserman. In future issues, we hope to have a question and answer column written by professionals, who will be able to explain in depth some of the many facets of preservation.

Your ideas, questions and comments are welcomed. Please feel free to write both to us and for us.

Sharon Churchill, Editor

A NEW ADDRESS-A NEW OFFICE

NLL-URST has opened an office at 10 Meridian Street in New London. It is across the street from the YMCA. It will be staffed part-time by Sharon Churchill, newly hired administrator for the organization. Anyone interested in volunteering some time should call 443-2118. An Open House is planned for Sunday, December 16, from 1-4 P.M. Please come and bring a friend.

OFFICE EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Do you have office equipment that isn't be being used? We have a home for it in our new office. Your generosity is tax-deductible. The following items are needed:

Typing table
File cabinet
Card file boxes
Chairs
Lamps

Also, posters and material about New London and preservation would be appreciated. These items can be on loan-call 443-2118

is now located in the refurbished 1856 Mystic National Bank in Old Mystic village. In his earlier position as a member of the Connecticut Bicentennial Commission, Fish helped the group obtain a federal grant for the rehabilitation of the building.

Fish has come a long ways since those first solitary days tending the Puritan graveyard in Mystic. Not only has he been a member of many local preservation groups, including the Mystic River Historical Society, the Dennison Society, the Gallup Society and NLL-URST, but between 1974 and 1978, Fish, appointed by Governor Meskill, served on the Connecticut Historical Commission.

This year, Fish received the prestigious Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History. Each year this award goes to 31 out of 100 candidates from all over the country.

Like an Olympic gold medal, this award signifies excellence of achievement on the part of nonprofessionals in the area of historical preservation

George Campbell of Stonington nominated Fish. Says Fish, "I'm proud of the award. But I think I had the backing of a good promotional manager in gaining it." Jill Wasserman

RESTORATION REPORT

938 Bank Street is no longer. This Cape Cod house, built between 1820-1830, has been disassembled board by board, and is being rebuilt on Pequot Avenue. Richard Humphreville bought the building in September from Rogers Motors to prevent its demolition. The task of labelling each item and carefully removing to the building site took two months.

Unforseen problems have complicated the restoration. Severe termite rot necessitated the replacement of the sills and some joists. Good portions of the joists will be reused as posts. One of the original beams, which is still sound, is a six by six 30 foot beam, weighing 600 lbs.

Humphreville plans an authentic restoration. The two fireplaces downstairs and one upstairs will be constructed out of the original brick. The walls will be plaster, the roof, cedar shakes. The original 6/9 windows will be reused.

Much of the work on the post and beam dwelling is being down by hand. Friends join Humphreville every afternoon at the building site. He hopes to be living in the house by next June.

The determination of which program to go through is made by the Housing Conservation office. The major deciding factor is which program has the money to lend. The tentative allocation for this year's 3-12 program is \$163,000.

The Housing Conservation Office is inundated with applications. A one year wait is not uncommon, before work can begin. Since July, more than 30 projects have been approved, at a cost of approximately \$200,000. Almost all the money allocated for the grant program has been spent on eleven homes.

Mr. Louhisdon's greatest fear is that the program will be hampered by the new volumes of requirements that funnel down from federal agencies. He cited such an example requiring an environmental impact statement for each project.

The three largest loans made by Housing Conservation have been for restoration projects. The first was to Dale and Sharon Plummer for their home at 32 Starr Street. That was exceeded by a \$39,600 loan to Philip Van Brunt to restore his home at 110 Hempstead Street. The largest loan to date is for \$50,000 to Mark and Beth Connolly, to restore their large five-apartment Greek Revival house on Franklin Street.

Mr. Louhisdon feels that restoration is the most desirable route to follow when dealing with an old house with historical or architectural character. The greatest setback is the expense. He pointed out that restoration will usually increase the cost of the work by 20-30%. The increased value of the homes should also be considered when evaluating expense of restoration.

One of the unfortunate aspects of the loans is the lack of controls on what people can do to the buildings. Aluminum siding is always presented as an alternative to painting, despite its tendency to cover all detail and character of the building.

Despite its drawbacks, perhaps no other agency can take credit for so many improvements in New London as can Housing Conservation. An average of 40-60 houses/year have been affected by the loan program, depending on the amount of funding available.

The office has not been beset by speculators, as shown in a study completed six months ago. Of the more than 400 homes affected by the program in the past seven years, none have been resold.

HOUSING CONSERVATION STATISTICS

	<u>Loan</u>	<u>3-12</u>	<u>Grant</u>
Annual Income Cutoff Levels			
1 person	\$14,700	\$12,900	
2	18,700	14,750	
3	20,100	16,600	
4	21,800	18,450	
Maximum Amount of Loan or Grant			
	\$50,000	\$27,000/unit	\$5000
Period of Repayment			
	25 years	20 years	

1 person	\$14,700	\$12,900
2	18,700	14,750
3	20,100	16,600
4	21,800	18,450

TWO PRESERVATION BILLS BEFORE CONGRESS

Two major preservation bills have come before Congress this summer. One is the National Heritage Policy Act of 1979 proposed by the Carter Administration. The other, proposed by Rep. John Seiberling of Ohio, is H.R. 5139 Seiberling Bill.

Under the Administration's proposal, the National Register program remains basically the same. The most significant change is the inclusion of a similar program for the natural environment. Both programs would be administered by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Seiberling Bill would create an independent federal agency, the Historic Preservation Agency, to handle all preservation programs. The major thrust of the bill is to expand and strengthen the National Register program. It attempts to distinguish between listings on the Register for planning purposes, and those which serve as an identification of national resources.

The Seiberling Bill was offered as "an alternative for discussing the future role of historic preservation in this country" according to its sponsor. Both bills should lead to a serious examination of preservation policy by Congress.

A major fault with the Administration proposal is the placement of both natural and built resources under the same federal agency. This could weaken considerably the momentum the preservation movement has picked up in recent years. It could seriously dilute the efforts of preservationists, making preservation only a minor part of the agency's responsibility.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IN PROGRESS

On October 28th, NLL-URST kicked off a major membership drive for 1979. More than 110 people attended a program at the Lyman Allyn Museum to see Todd Gipstein's film "Station", hear speakers from the city and NLL-URST, and discuss upcoming plans for 1980.

Three weeks later, 25% of the way towards a goal of 100 new members, 55 people came to a pot-luck dinner at the home of Carrie and Dick Makover. New members and old were able to meet in a congenial and relaxed atmosphere, and find out more of what NLL-URST is about.

One month after the kickoff, 40 new members have joined NLL-URST. Thanks to a dedicated committee, the drive is on its way towards a successful completion.

Committee members are:

Peg Bray
Lenore Karterud
Sheila Logan
Libbe Miceli
Doris Murphy

The following people also helped with the pot-luck dinner:

Corrine Brown
Gemma Cini
Alice Cohn
David Hillsberg
Winnie Josephson

The drive is chaired by Sharon Churchill.



SHARE NLL-URST WITH A FRIEND

Our membership drive is in full swing, with one month left to go. There is tremendous enthusiasm among our members, and NLL-URST has projects for the coming year that deserve community support.

The membership is the most important element of our organization. Dues money provides operating principal. But it is necessary to recognize the value of moral support that the membership provides. The members are our strength and back us in advocating preservation in the community.

Members are also the best source of new members. As word spreads to friends, neighbors and co-workers, more people realize the value of our work. NLL-URST has an impressive record of activities and projects, some of which are just beginning. So give us your support in this most important way—share us with your friends.

Now Available—Gift Memberships in NLL-URST
For that hard-to-please person on your list, or the person who has everything. Give them a part in New London's heritage.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Student/Senior Citizen	\$ 5	Contributor	\$ 25
Individual	10	Patron	50
Family	15	Life	150
Business	25		

I enclose remittance for \$_____ for _____ membership(s) in
NEW LONDON LANDMARKS-UNION RAILROAD STATION TRUST, Inc.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Return to:

NLL-URST, Inc.
P.O. Box 1134
New London, CT. 06320

Contributions are tax-deductible

NEW LONDON HARBOR CRUISE

October 6 dawned sunny and cool, with a gusty wind. Undaunted by the prospects of rough sailing, 38 members of NLL-URST set off for Project Oceanology, to board the Enviro-Lab. From the time of arrival at the Project until our departure three hours later instructors Tom McLaughlin and Brae Rafferty both educated and entertained their "crew".

One of the highlights of the trip was a tour of the New London Ledge Light, built in the early part of the century, and one of the few manned lighthouses remaining on the East coast. The huge Fresnal lens in the tower was most impressive, looking like a massive glass sculpture, refracting prisms of light around itself. From the tower in the top of the light, one commands a magnificent view of the New London harbor and of Fisher's Island Sound.

A harbor tour up the Thames River followed, and various landmarks on both the Groton and New London banks were noted. The passengers were asked to imagine the riverbanks completely undeveloped. It was a difficult task when faced with the enormity of both the Electric Boat and Pfizer complexes.

Once again on shore, we were treated to a showing of slides taken of other lighthouses in Long Island Sound, and slides taken on Gardiner's Island, the oldest and largest privately owned island in the United States.

Everyone left pleased with the trip, despite the frothy water and even more enthusiastic about New London's situation at the conjunction of the Thames River, the Long Island and Fisher's Island Sounds.

We welcome the following to our membership:

New London

Helene Barbera
Mr. and Mrs. Russell DeMarco
Philomena and Manuel Faria
Shirley Gottesdiener
John and Nancy Gula
Elizabeth Hoare
Sylvester Husling
Saul and Susan Kadin
A. Kaplan
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kaplan
Frances Kavulich
Michele Kripps
Lucy Nunes
Quality Printers
Susan and Michael Schefers
Anna May Schuch
Agnes Schwartz
Pauline Stevenson
Mrs. Joseph Sweeney
Tonia Taj
Carolyn Wood
Josephine Zielinski

Mrs. Robert P. Anderson-Noank
Shirley Beckwith-Niantic
Josephine Beebe-Niantic
Caroline Boyce-Ithaca, N.Y.
Maureen Davis-Waterford
Mr. and Mrs. George Finn-Groton
Josephine Gerwick-Niantic
David Hillsberg-Waterford
Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Ketchen-East Lyme
Esther Kraus-Niantic
Joe Manchester-Waterford
Maria Marsala-Norwich
Peter Matthews-Stonington
Samuel and Betty Morrison-East Lyme
William Saars-Niantic
Helen Shelby-Groton
Edna Watrous-Niantic
Richard and June Williams-Waterford

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